**Selectmen’s Meeting Minutes**

**May 8, 2023**

**7:00 PM Quinlan** called the meeting to order. Eileen Naber states that the School Board set up for their meetings offers a screen for viewing documents. She is aware that the Town did not budget for a screen, but she asks that the Town consider it. **Brown** states that we thought that we could use the podium again so that speakers would be visible on camera. Naber states the set up was fine at the School Board hearing as you could hear the speakers and Brown states that those speaking need to be visible as well and since our camera only faces the front of the room those wishing to speak would need to be facing the camera. Schwarz states that the planning board does have a projector that could be used without having to spend money on a monitor if they would be willing to share.

Cindy Raspiller asks what is on the agenda as she was told that the public meeting issue was on the agenda, but the agenda was not posted online so she is unsure what is on the agenda. **Quinlan** states that it is not on the agenda and Raspiller states that she would like to discuss it in public time then. **Quinlan** recognizes Raspiller and she states that she is at the meeting representing the Mont Vernon Democrats. Last week they were informed they would no longer be allowed to meet at the library due to a Select Board policy that prohibits political organizations from meeting in Town owned property. First of all, she would like to ask if that policy is in writing. **Esposito** states he does not think it is, it’s been something in place since before he joined the Board. He states they have had a policy forever that we are neutral and don’t allow any political organizations to meet in Town owned buildings. **Quinlan** states that when he returned on Tuesday of last week he heard about the issue and asked Cleary and Schwarz to do an exhaustive search of the Town records to find a written policy and there was not policy that pertained to this issue, therefore we have no policy, just tradition. Raspiller states that they would like to meet at the library. Their next meeting is June 4 and they understand if there was an official Town policy it would need to be debated and voted on by the Select Board and **Quinlan** says it would. Raspiller states they would like to be involved in discussing that. Her concern is that not allowing this type of meeting in a public building is inconvenient and possibly illegal, both the NH and the US constitutions speak to freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and if there’s an issue with a political group behaving badly she is in favor of dealing with it, but to just prohibit it in a Town where there is literally nowhere else to meet is unnecessary. **Quinlan** states that he understands that, but that as of this moment there is no written policy. The Selectmen have been discussing how to move forward and they will be going through all the policies we should have and get them established prior to the end of the year. This is one of the Boards top priorities for 2023. For now, there is nothing written, so as far as **Quinlan** is concerned the library can be used by anyone who would like to use it. **Esposito** states he objects to that 100%. This is ridiculous. **Quinlan** states it is not ridiculous, we do not have a policy, only tradition. An audience member asks what **Esposito’s** basis for objection and Esposito states is that the Town has always been neutral on this. It’s opening pandoras box and setting a precedent. **Quinlan** states that it behooves us to create a policy. Jill Weber states that there are only two parties. **Esposito** states there are more than two parties. Lorrie Hayes states there may be more parties, but that she doesn’t understand how constitutionally the Selectmen can prohibit us from meeting in buildings that are Town owned and that we pay taxes on. **Quinlan** states we have no policy, but there will be a policy within the next few weeks. It will be debated, it will be a public discussion, and then we will decide what that policy is going to be. Raspiller says so we can expect that to be on the agenda and we can expect the agenda to be posted prior to the meeting so we can come prepared and **Quinlan** states it will. In the meantime, **Quinlan** states there is nothing barring it. **Esposito** states yes there is, we have never allowed it. Jill Weber and Lorrie Hayes say that’s not true, and **Esposito** asks them to please allow him to speak. When Bill O’Brian used the school, we were deceived. We were told it would be his people, not the event he held. Hayes states that she is not referring to that, but her specific experience with the NH Democratic Party, Mont Vernon Democratic Party. They met at the library for many, many years and Esposito asked when they did that. Naber states that the library owned the building then. Raspiller states that they held the caucus there in March of this year and Hayes agrees. **Esposito** states that no one asked the Town if they could, so we didn’t know about it. The room breaks down into unintelligible commenting. **Quinlan** calls the group to order and recognizes Bonnie Angulas. Angulas states that before the Town owned the building the Democrats met there. It is not a meeting room, but rather a small space available to the public. We have a simple policy for using the library that doesn’t prohibit anyone from using the library. We have a behavior policy in case the group using it gets out of line. Angulas states that she has called other libraries to see what their policies are. They do not prohibit political groups to meet there, in fact they encourage civic groups to meet at the library for free. Libraries are centers for democracy. Civic engagement. If we do not have these meetings in the library, be it the Republicans or Democrats, where in Mont Vernon would you meet? If you don’t have an alternate space available, she asks the Board to consider making the library an open space for everyone. Andrea Baver states that the Town of Milford has an 11-page application to use their space which is open to all entities. The Democratic group of Mont Vernon is a civic group, and the idea that you’re being neutral by not having political organizations meet in Town spaces will actually drive things underground and create division because it’s not open and apparent for all who want to attend. We also provide a vital service to the quality of this community by keeping people informed of what policies are being worked on in Concord, help people understand their voting rights, where to vote, when to vote, how to change their voting status… We contribute to the wellbeing of this community. We’re open to everyone; we don’t spread hated or promote anything that’s anti community oriented. She understands the idea, but she thinks it will backfire. Jill Weber states that driving these things underground is the beginning of the problem. Zoe Fimbel states that the school is available for meetings almost every night. Raspiller asks who owns the school. Naber and **Quinlan** say the school, SAU 39. Angulas states she guarantees they have a policy. **Quinlan** asks if there are any other comments because he’d like to move the meeting forward. Susan King Ecklund asks what the position based on and **Quinlan** states it predates him so he couldn’t say. He believes that unfortunately Mont Vernon has not been as organized as it should be and as far as the office staff could find, there was no written policy, therefore a policy doesn’t exist, and that is something we need to fix. Ecklund asks if that includes marching in parades and Quinlan says to the best of his knowledge a policy does not exist.

Tony Silva approaches the Board with a request for a public event on June 3 for a fundraiser to build an arena on their farm. He states he met with the PD and they stated that he should speak to the Board. **Quinlan** asks Sergeant Aaron Daigneault if he can elaborate. Daigneault states that the PD does not have a policy on holding a function on private property, but there is a Town ordinance for public events on private property based on the number of attendees. Zoe Fimbel asks at what point do you need a police detail and Daigneault states he will research that. **Quinlan** suggests that Silva works with the office, PD and FD to finalize his plans. **Esposito** asks when the event will be. Silva states June 3. Hayes states that it was not stated that there was a restriction, but a need to receive ordinance approval based on the number of people, is that correct? **Quinlan** states he remembers an event years ago that needed a police detail because of the size of the party. Raspiller asks if it is a Town ordinance and is told yes. Raspiller asks where the Town ordinances are? Many Towns have them on the website. Schwarz states they should be on the website but that should have been done when the website was created. Raspiller asks if it is ok to post the Dems meeting to the website for June 4 at the library and **Quinlan** states yes. Weber requests to be involved in the discussion regarding policies. **Quinlan** states it will all be posted ahead of time and done in a public meeting.

**7:20 PM Department Head Meeting**

**Sergeant Aaron Daigneault – Police Department**

* Twice per year drug take back day on April 22, turned in 7.2 pounds of discarded medications to the DEA.
* Chief Slavin is setting up the annual planting of the flowers prior to Memorial Day at the school.
* Recently purchased 3 new portable radios and a ballistics shield with grant funding.
* New Cruiser should be completed and ready to pick up this week.
* Ordered 8 body worn cameras which were delivered today, will be waiting until June to roll those out due to pending training. Quinlan asks if they need to specially fitted to the vests and Daigneault replies no, that was a different make/model. Brown asks if they also got the storage when they got the cameras and is told yes. Hayes asks if there is a policy on the use of the cameras and Daigneault responds the policy is still being written.
* Fifth grade DARE graduation is May 26 with 37 students graduating.
* **Fire Department – Chief Jay Wilson**
* Waiting to hear back for Engine 1 and Engine 2 maintenance appointments. They will be out of service 1-2 weeks each time. They will try to do them back-to-back. The hoses will be removed from the trucks and tested at the same time.
* Getting ready for Spring Cleanup.
* Emails are going into spam from the permits email. Regular permits are available online, at the state level, but the seasonal permits are getting kicked to spam. Esposito asks Schwarz to check with I.T.
* **Highway Department – Ben Crosby**
* Started spring grading. Should take about two weeks, and then will transition to paving. Most of our attention will be on Brook Rd from Gavin until about 28 Brook Rd. Overall cost is looking to be above $120K. **Quinlan** asks that he get the number to the Board this week, so they are ready to discuss it next week. Brook Rd. is closed as of last week since the outlet of that culvert has become more compromised. Hansen’s schedule for repairs is beginning end June and should last 4 weeks, so he’s anticipating an end date for late July.
* Dump trucks are so far so good. Minor repairs on the ’07 but it is back in service. Mike Jennings states that while the work done over by the old museum looks nice, the bridge over there really impedes the road. Crosby states that the property owner has been put on notice to clear it. He believes that will require a permit because they’ll be going into the brook. **Quinlan** asks if that’s through the state or DPW and Crosby states it’s the NH DES.
* **Quinlan** brings up the road closure for Amherst Rd./Mont Vernon Rd. He and Crosby spoke to the DPW director in Amherst today to find out what is planned. For now, they’re closing on May 17 – June 28 due to a different culvert replacement. They have provided a detour route that he would like Schwarz to put on the website. **Brown** asks what they are doing about the buses. **Quinlan** asks Schwarz to contact the SAU tomorrow regarding this issue and report back. We need to get the town notified asap. **Esposito** asked why they moved it up and **Quinlan** states they are attempting to straddle their fiscal year for the expense. **Quinlan** warns the PD to watch out for heavy trucks attempting to use the detour. We do not want trucks tearing up Old Amherst Rd. Daigneault suggests that Crosby posts them, and he agrees. **Brown** asks where Crosby will set up our detour signs? **Quinlan** states they’re already taken care of and Crosby states we are not involved in the Amherst detour signs. Lorrie Hayes asks if we can post the road closure to our electronic signs?
* Kids Fishing Derby Sunday, June 4.
* **Recreation Director – Heather Kennedy**
* We are in the final weeks of Gala prep. She goes over the schedule of events for the day including participation from the PD, FD, AMS marching band, Souhegan band, PTA from Village School, Congregational Church, Girl Scouts, Beautification, Historical Society, Heritage Commission. She asks if the Board would like to ride in the parade as well and **Quinlan** states he will be out of state. **Brown** states he doesn’t mind. Kennedy asks if there will be a Friends of the Library event and Angulas states they are not doing it this year.
* Have started booking concerts for the Summer Concert Series

**Library Director – Bonnie Angulas**

* Last week of April was National Library Week and the Wizarding Week Camp at the Village School. 75 children from grades 2-12 attended and about 20 adult volunteers. Special thanks to Sue from the MVVS kitchen who helped with the lunches for the kids and Angel who found janitorial support.
* This Sunday the library will host a make and take Mother’s Day bouquet for kids to make for mom, and card designed by Jill Weber.
* Merrimack Beekeepers will be coming in for Intro to Beekeeping.
* Plans for Summer Reading Program are underway. Did not like the National theme so they will be doing their own: Reading is Magic. The Village School will be coming over to tour the library. Not everyone from the community uses the library so this gives them a chance to see what going on for the summer. They will be working with Souhegan High School as their students have required reading over the Summer and student traffic for these selections has really dropped off. Not sure if they are borrowing online, but they haven’t been coming in to get their book. They will collaborate for 100% participation. The adult Summer Reading Program is going to be run by Bonnie, and Senior Summer Session is returning, hosted by the Friends of the Library. Eileen Naber will be helping Bonnie with that. They may be asking the Selectmen to join one of the weeks so the seniors can chat with them.
* Friends of the Library have added two new museum passes, Seacoast Science Center in Rye and Strawberry Bank in Portsmouth.
* Story walk and Fairy Garden have been cleaned and updated.
* Tent is coming soon.

**7:45 PM Brown motions to go into non-public session to discuss an issue that falls under RSA 91-A:3(d) Second by Esposito, Brown yes, Esposito yes, Quinlan yes, motion passed.**

**8:00 PM Esposito motions to come out of non-public session, second by Brown, Esposito yes, Quinlan yes, Brown yes, motion passed.**

**Brown motions to seal the minutes from the non-public session, second by Esposito, all in favor, motion passed.**

**8:05Pm Schwarz** states that she had a conversation with the cleaner today that when the cleaner arrived on Sunday at 8pm all interior doors in the office were open. The main doors to the building were locked, as was the main office door, but the door to the meeting room, bathroom and the door to the rear storage room was open. Schwarz states she was in the building at 1:30pm and no doors were open. So, between these times, someone entered the building that has access to the office and left all doors open. Daigneault was on shift at that time and saw nothing concerning, and Schwarz does not believe anything is missing. She requests that the Selectmen re-invest time into placing the security cameras already purchased in use within the building. **Brown** asks if that is something that the contractor who installed our meeting room camera can do and Schwarz states she can ask. **Quinlan** says to do that. **Brown** asks if we know how many people have keys to the building and Schwarz states yes, she has a key sign out sheet in the office. Crosby states another failsafe would be a keypad with pin to lock the doors. **Quinlan** asks if there was any activity at the office this past weekend and Schwarz states not that she’s aware of. The only thing that she could see is that the Building Inspectors timecard was on her desk, but she has never seen the Building Inspector leave doors open like that.

**8:05 PM** Schwarz reports that she heard back on the Jean Shaheen Congressionally Directed Spending requests that were submitted by the Town. Neither the Town Hall nor Access Road requests were recommended, but she did recommend the Body Worn Cameras request. Annie Kuster requests are still pending. She states there may be an issue with the Body Worn Camera request since the cameras were already ordered and received, but we will see when the time comes.

**8:10 PM Quinlan** asks Schwarz to present the first draft policies to the board. Schwarz presents a policy on Overtime Compensation needing updates because our Employee Handbook is out of date with the Federal Law. She recommends that once we come to a final draft that it be reviewed by Town Counsel. **Quinlan** states he assumes there are other parts of the Employee Handbook that needs to be updated and Schwarz states there are plenty. She did go through and update for more “modern” terminology and concerns when she first came in to work for the Town, but she did not compare every aspect to the updated laws. She will do that as well, but again, anything that is changed should be run past Town Counsel. Schwarz goes over the Draft Building Use Policy. Schwarz states she was unable to find anything written in the office regarding this, so she went through Selectmen’s minutes all the way back to 2002 and found numerous times where the Selectmen have denied political groups access to the Town buildings in the past, so there is a precedent for that. She did print those out and highlight them for Cleary to bring to the meeting tonight, but as Cleary was unable to attend, Schwarz did not have them on hand tonight., but we have been saying that for at least twenty years. **Esposito** says it’s policy, and Schwarz says well, I couldn’t find anything in the computer, but we have said it several times in the past, including to Lorrie Hayes and the Dem’s in 2011 when they wanted to use the Town Hall. I have not gone through paper documents yet, so it may be in those. She states they were allowed to use the library then because the library was not Town owned. She obtained Building Use policies from other Towns and used them as a template to create one for Mont Vernon. The last policy Schwarz presents is a wage and expense reporting policy. She and Cleary had sent out an email to department heads prior to New Year with our new guideline requests, and for the most part they are being met, but some departments/committees are still slow to turn in timecards and expenses or are not submitting them correctly. This creates extra legwork for the office and causes delays in getting the manifest ready for the Selectmen. **Quinlan** states we are way behind on the policy thing, and this will be something we need to work on this year. Brown asks which one we should start on and **Quinlan** states the office ones are the most important for now because it affects the running of the Town, and with us having a Town Treasurer from outside the office now we need a policy writing him into the Town as well. **Quinlan** states that he asked Schwarz to get the new Treasurer into training at NHMA and Schwarz states he is there tonight. **Quinlan** states we all have ideas as to what needs to be tightened up. Why don’t we all make a list of things we want to work on and start there, but for right now, we should review these three and act on them next Monday. Then we can get in touch with Town Counsel. Naber asks can we view the Building Use Policy draft online or notify the public so that they can be involved in the decision making, because Naber has thought of 4 other things we need policies for. Schwarz states that according to RSA 41:11(a) that the Selectmen have full control over the Town Buildings and how they are use, so if the Selectmen choose to hear those people that are requesting to be involved, that is fine, but the final say sits with the Selectmen. Naber asks if the Selectmen have the final authority on what happens in the Town buildings, then they also have the authority to give that authority to someone else? As in, can they delegate that authority to the department heads to set their own policies. Zoe Fimbel asks but then do the Selectmen have the final say over how their policies would be written? Schwarz states that the way she wrote the draft it states that the requests all come into the Town Offices, mostly for scheduling reasons, but that we will coordinate with the department heads of the locations but that the decision is made here with or without the Selectmen, however the Selectmen decide to run that. That way we have one calendar with all the events showing where people are and when. That doesn’t mean that’s what the Selectmen will agree to, but that’s how the draft is written right now. Naber states this is a big improvement over the way it is now. **Brown** states we would have one central person do it. Schwarz states yes, one person to coordinate the application, posting of meeting and scheduling of the meetings. Fimbel asks if the Town Offices take this over, when a group uses a community meeting room on a regular basis, would they have to contact every meeting or could they give a series of dates and Schwarz states a series of dates up front would be preferable, just for scheduling ease. Individual Committees, commissions, boards, etc. would still have access to the calendar to put on their own meetings, et., the way the draft policy is written it is only for non-affiliate organizations. **Brown** asks would that be extended to when we have a tent space and Schwarz states that it would be if it were not an event for an affiliated board, department, committee etc. Schwarz states that she things the confusion may come in here because there was a time that the Town did not own the library building and they were free to hold their own events. Then the Town bought the building and Covid happened, and no one was meeting and now that meetings are starting to happen again the rules are different. Daigneault asks would the PD have to apply for functions they hold at the FD or just speak to Jay? Schwarz states that as its written she thinks they would check with the office. Schwarz also points out that while it’s not in the policy as written, she and Cleary had a discussion that if for some reason Welfare needed a meeting space, there should be a caveat somewhere that states Welfare has precedence over any other group. This is because the former Welfare office has been converted to a records room leaving them without a dedicated space to meet. **Quinlan** states he thinks that’s a good idea. Naber asks about the Town Green etc. Schwarz states it would apply if it were a formal group function. Han

**8:30 PM** Schwarz resigns to the Selectmen from the Historic District Commission effective immediately. She states that as there is a new application on the horizon it came up in conversation with **Quinlan** at the office that there may be a conflict of interest with a Town employee sitting on a Town regulatory board/commission. She feels that she should not be making decisions on what homeowners do with their homes while she is a Town Employee. She has advised Karolin Campbell; the Vice Chair and she is prepared to handle the next meeting where they will conduct their annual officer elections. Schwarz states she is the Historic District Rep to the Heritage Commission, and NHMA has confirmed there is no conflict with her remaining on the Heritage Commission as it is not a regulatory board, but someone from the Historic District Commission will have to be named Rep to the Heritage Commission. She suggests **Brown** as he sits on both commissions as the Selectmen’s Rep currently and the Board agrees. **Quinlan** states the board can put that on next week’s agenda.

**8:35 PM Esposito** states he would like it on the record that he objects to having a political meeting in a Town owned building. He knows there’s no policy, but it is tradition, and it’s been that way for many years. He wants to remind the board that the Library Trustees do not run the Town. He asks if the board is going to take a vote on allowing them to use the library for their meeting and **Quinlan** states he doesn’t see why, if we don’t have a policy, we have no reason to vote. We have to write a policy and we will stand by it. **Esposito** states that a year and a half ago I told you there was a conflict of interest between the two of you and the library and it was apparent tonight. You brought the whole library and their people into the meeting. **Quinlan** states he did not bring anyone to the meeting. **Esposito** says it sounds like a set up to him. **Quinlan** says that’s too bad, don’t accuse people of things – **Esposito** says I didn’t accuse anyone of anything and **Quinlan** states yes, you are. You’re accusing us of colluding in some fashion. I knew nothing about this until I got back last week, and the officeinformed me of the meeting. I told them to look for policies and to come up with this. I haven’t been in contact with anyone from the library or the democratic party, I am not a democrat. **Esposito** says I didn’t say you were. **Quinlan** states that we have to follow the rules as best we can, and if there aren’t set rules, there’s nothing to follow. That’s something we need to get done and approved and get them on record. As for now there’s nothing that I can see that can legally stop them from meeting. Mike **Fimbel** states he thinks a Judge would see it differently, given the precedent and **Brown** states the three lawyers that I’ve spoken to support that opinion.

**8:40 PM Brown motions to adjourn, second by Esposito. Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Schwarz